DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 270 256 RC 015 761

TITLE	Legends from the Dakota, Ojibwe, and Winnebago Tribes.
INSTITUTION	Minneapolis Public Schools, Minn.
PUB DATE	78
NOTE	177p.; For related document, see RC 015 760.
AVAILABLE FROM	Special School District No. 1, Minneapolis Public Schools - Planning, Development and Evaluation, 807 Northeast Broadway, Minneapolis, MN 55413-2398 (booklets sold separately in lots of 10; each booklet is $6.24 for 10 copies except "Unktomi and the Ducks" which is $15.75 for ten; $5.00 billing charge unless prepaid).
PUB TYPE	Guides - Classroom Use - Materials (For Learner) (051)
EDRS PRICE	MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	*American Indian Culture; *American Indian Literature; American Indians; *Childrens Literature; Cultural Background; Cultural Images; Elementary Education; Illustrations; *Legends; *Supplementary Reading Materials; *Tribes
IDENTIFIERS	Dakota (Tribe); Ojibwe (Tribe); Winnebago (Tribe)

ABSTRACT

Seven legends of the Dakota, Ojibwe, and Winnebago tribes are presented, each in a separate booklet, and many feature the common character, or trickster, of the tribe's legends. The booklets follow a picture book format with large type, limited number of words per page, and black-and-white illustrations accompanying all text. The Dakota legends are "Tibdo" and "Unktomi and the Ducks." Ojibwe legends are "The Legend of the Owl," "Mikinok and Waboozoons," and "Waynaboozhoo and the Geese." Winnebago legends are "How the Gullies and Ditches Came to Be" and "The Trickster and the Tree." The booklets include background notes about the legends and definitions and pronunciation guides for Indian words. The legends have a related teacher's guide that contains objectives, teaching procedures, concepts and vocabulary, discussion questions, activity sheets, resources, and background information about the legends and trickster characters. (JHZ)

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LEGENDS FROM THE

DAKOTA,

OJIBWE AND

WINNEBAGO TRIBES

TIBDO

UNKTOMI AND THE DUCKS

THE LEGEND OF THE OWL

MIKINOK AND WABOOZOONS

WAYNABOOZHOO AND THE GEESE

HOW THE GULLIES AND DITCHES CAME TO BE

THE TRICKSTER AND THE TREE

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TIBDO

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TIBDO

A Dakota Legend

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TIBDO

A long time ago, two young cousins, *Tibdo*[1] and *Wenonah,*[2] lived with their grandmother, *Kunsi,*[3] in the woods.

One morning, *Kunsi* said to her grandson, *"Tibdo,* will you go into the woods to look for something to eat? When you return home, bring some wood for the fire."

As *Tibdo* left, he said, *"Kunsi,* I will be back as soon as I can."

[1]*Tibdo* (teeb´ dō) — Dakota word meaning "elder brother."
[2]*Wenonah* (wee noo´ nah) — Dakota word meaning "a girl who is the firstborn child."
[3]*Kunsi* (kooň shee´) — Dakota word meaning "grandmother."

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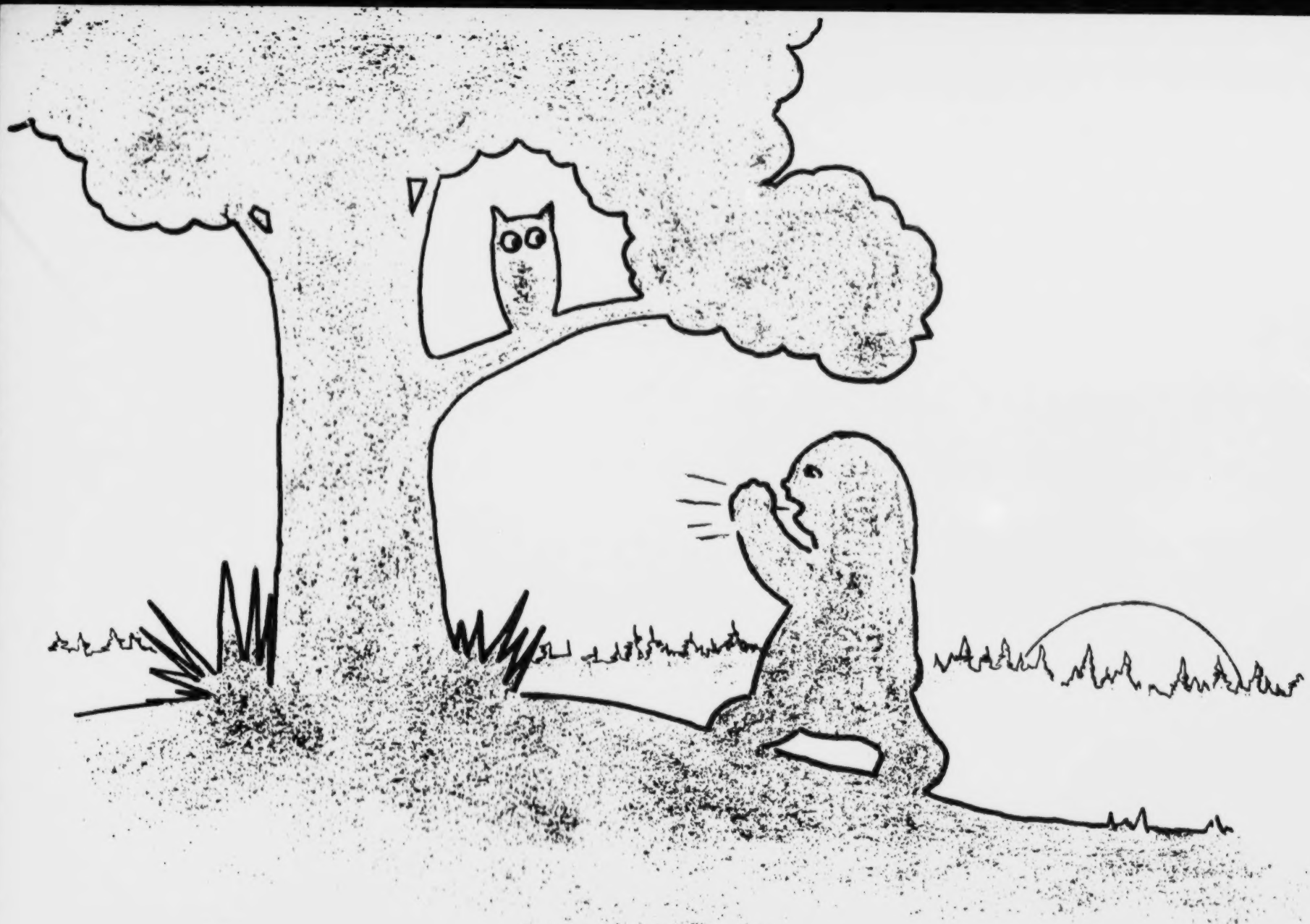
Wenonah, the granddaughter, stayed at home to help *Kunsi* and to keep her company.

Tibdo was gone all day. *Kunsi* said, "*Wenonah,* it is getting dark and *Tibdo* is not yet home." *Wenonah* answered, "Do not worry, I will go look for him."



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Wenonah walked in the woods and called, "*Tibdo!*" "*Tibdo!*" "*Tibdo!*" She looked for *Tibdo* a long time but soon it was very dark. *Wenonah* had to go back home.

When *Wenonah* got home, she said, "*Kunsi*, the woods were too dark and I could not find *Tibdo*. Maybe he will be back soon." *Kunsi* and *Wenonah* waited for *Tibdo*, but he did not return. Finally, they went to bed.

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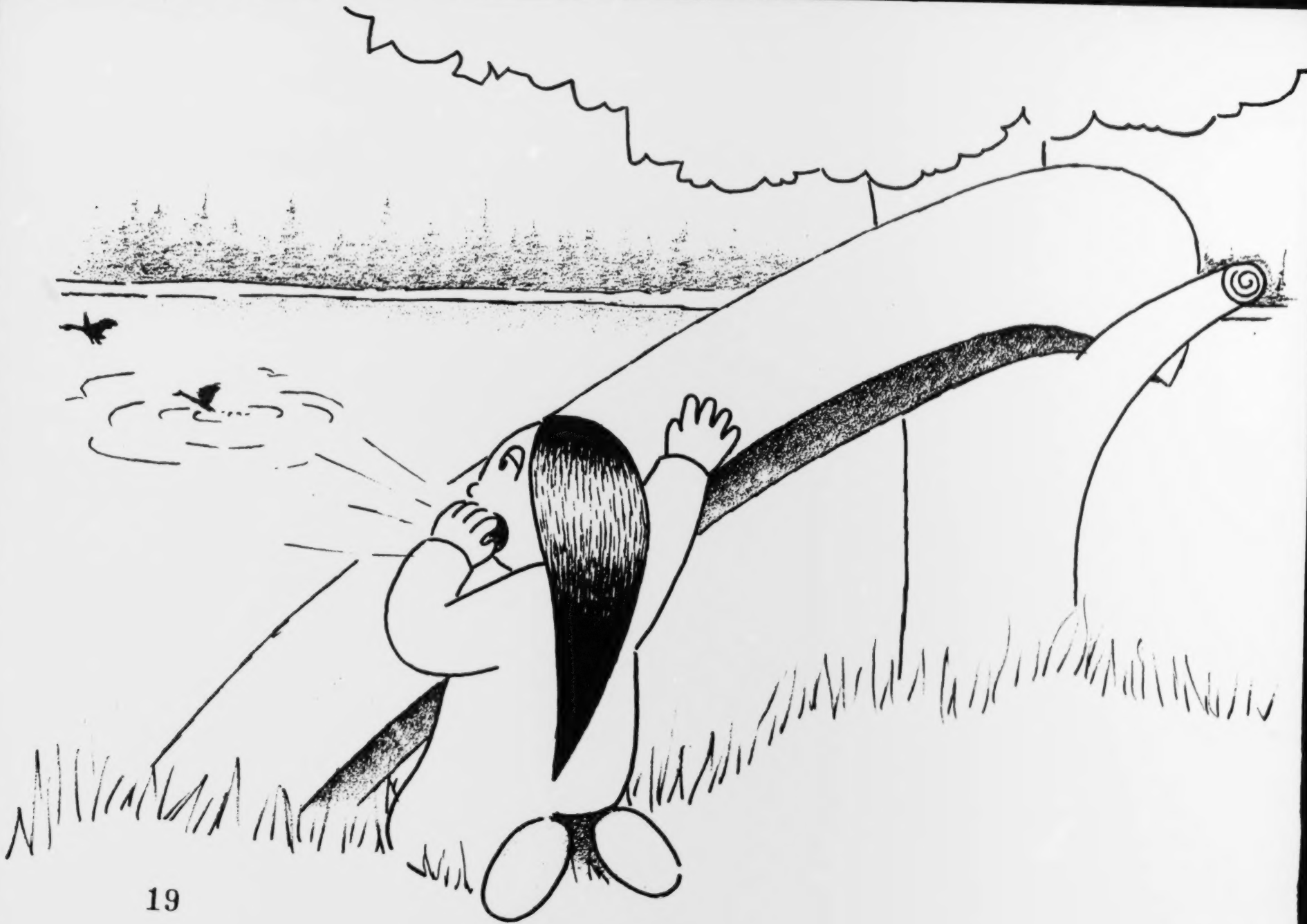
When they woke up the next morning, *Tibdo* was still not home. *Kunsi* said, "Maybe *Tibdo* fell asleep in the woods. Go look for him again. This time, call even louder so that he can hear you."



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Wenonah again left home to look for *Tibdo*. As she walked, she thought of all the places he could have gone. She often stopped to listen, but all she could hear were the sounds in the forest.

Finally, *Wenonah* went to the lake. She knew this was one of *Tibdo's* favorite places. He had often told her of the hunting and fishing he had done there. She looked and looked, but still could not find him. As she looked, she again called, *"Tibdo!"* *"Tibdo!"* *"Tibdo!"*

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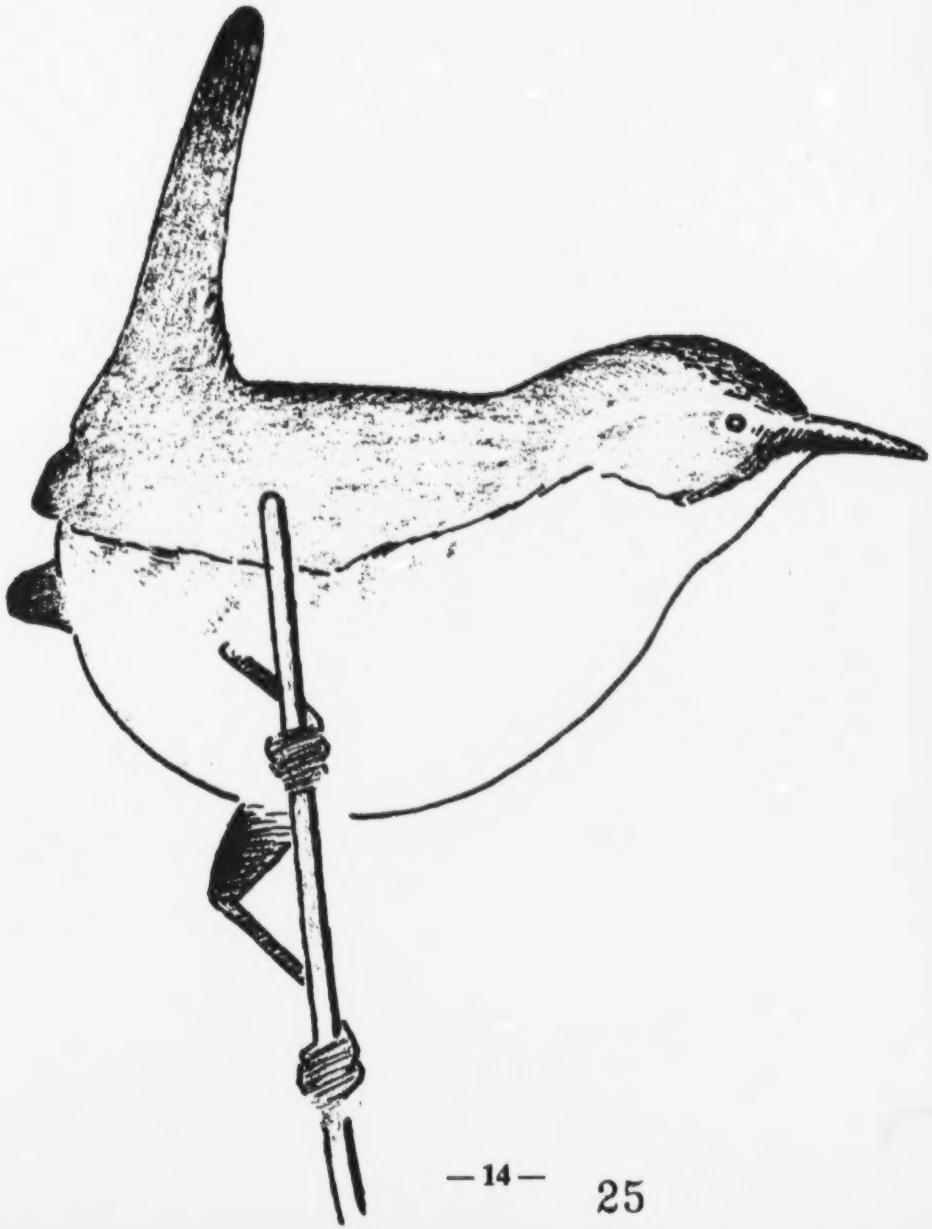
As *Wenonah* called, she heard the same call coming back to her, "*Tibdo!*" "*Tibdo!*" "*Tibdo!*" She looked around to see who was mocking her and found that it was a little bird.



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Sometimes in the woods, you can hear the bird calling "*Tibdo!*" "*Tibdo!*" "*Tibdo!*" This bird is a wren, and some people say it is still looking for *Tibdo.*

UNKTOMI
AND THE DUCKS

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UNKTOMI AND THE DUCKS

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UNKTOMI AND THE DUCKS

One day, *Unktomi*[1] was traveling through the woods. *Unktomi* traveled a lot. He always had a buffalo robe thrown over his shoulders. In his pack he carried a bag of songs, tricks, and stories.

[1]*Unktomi* (un któme) — the Dakota trickster. In the Dakota language, *Unktomi* means "spider."

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As the day went on, *Unktomi* began to feel hungry. He thought, "I must find something to eat for my dinner."

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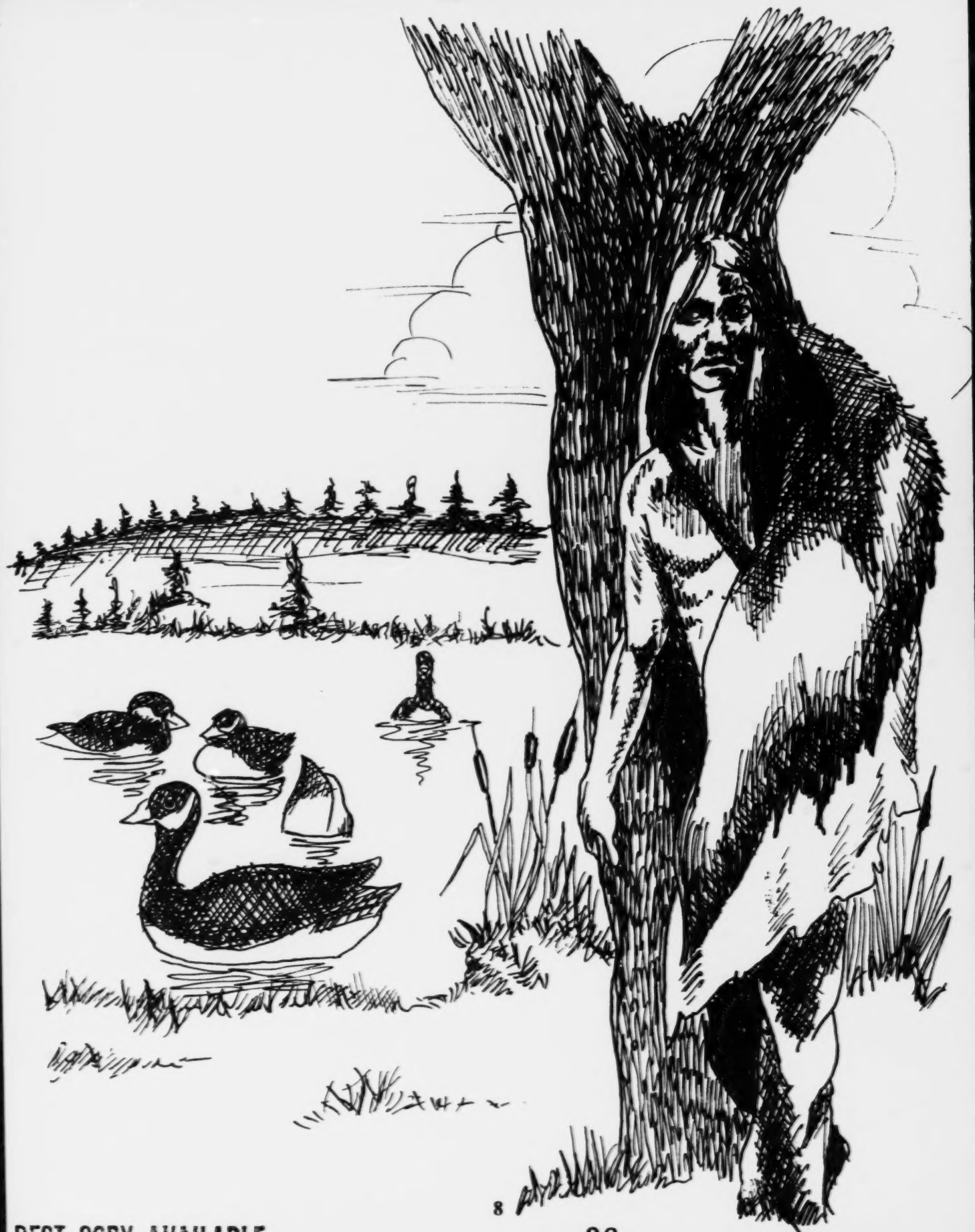
Unktomi looked for berries but did not find any. He tried to catch a rabbit. However, the rabbits stayed away from him. They knew about *Unktomi* and his tricks. Other animals knew about his tricks, too. They scurried away when they saw *Unktomi* coming. Birds flew into the sky when he came near. *Unktomi* knew it was going to be a hungry time.



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As he traveled on, *Unktomi* became hungrier and hungrier. Just as he was about to give up hope of finding food, he came to a lake. There, he saw a flock of ducks and geese. *Unktomi* thought, "I could have a big fat duck or maybe even a goose if I act wisely."

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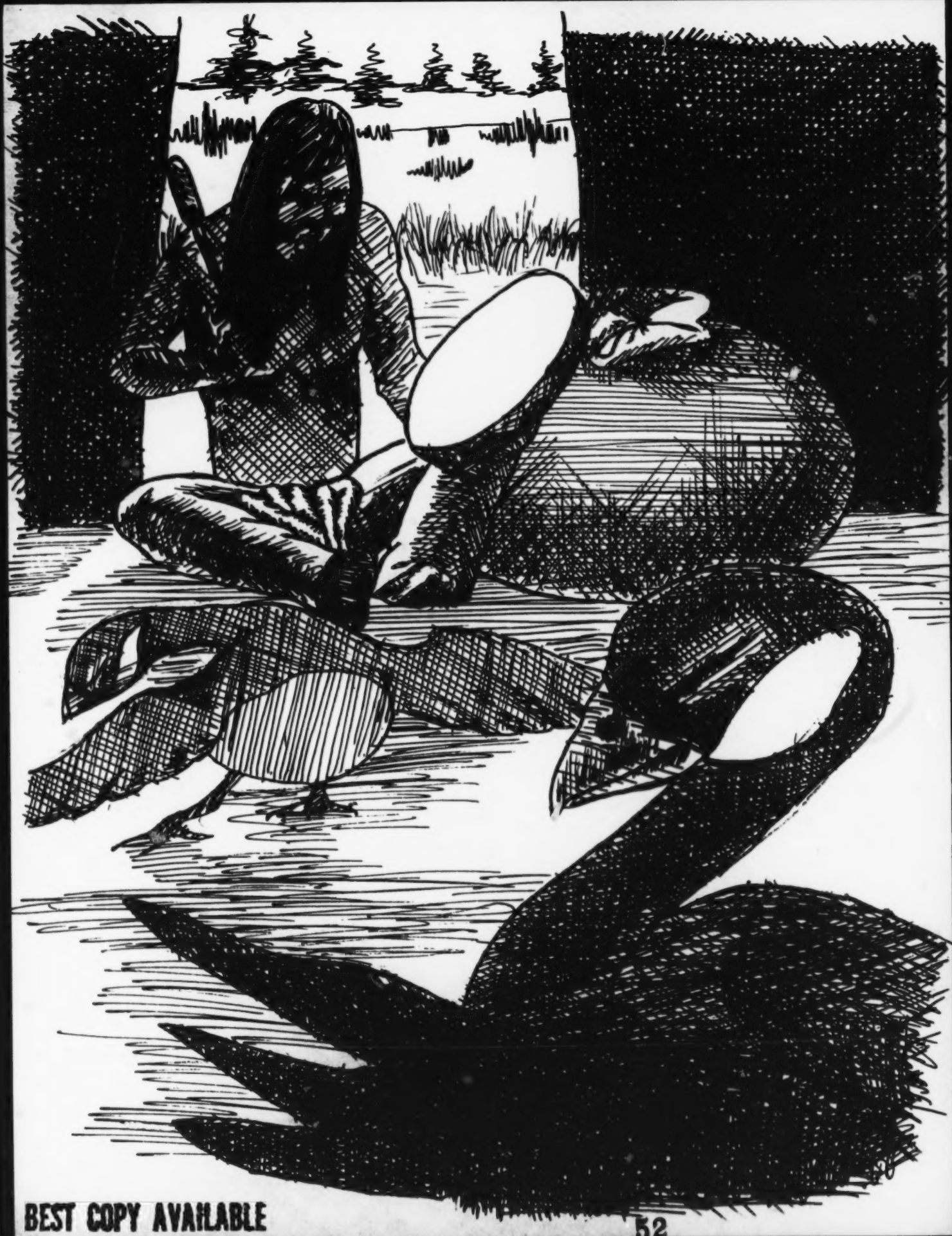

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He thought and thought. Then *Unktomi* got an idea. With his plan in mind, *Unktomi* pulled his buffalo robe around himself. He then slipped quietly into the weeds. He plucked some of the weeds and stuffed them into his pack.

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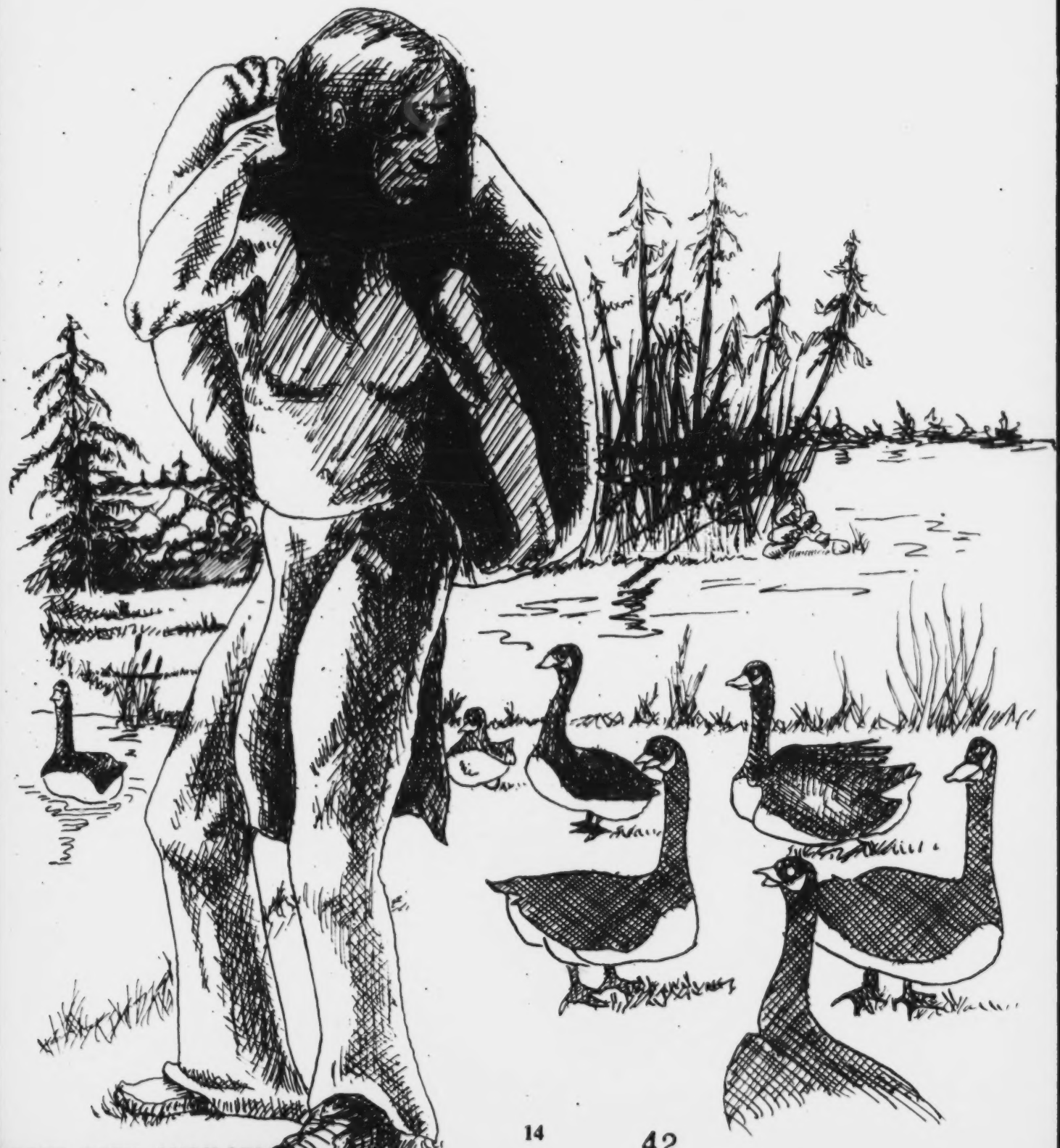
Unktomi then strolled along the lakeshore. He made sure the ducks and geese saw the pack on his back. Seeing *Unktomi*, the ducks and geese all started shouting. They yelled, *"Unktomi! Unktomi!* Where are you going? What are you carrying on your back?"

Unktomi pretended not to hear them. He thought, "I will wait until they get to shore before answering them."



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Soon all the ducks and geese scrambled to shore. They waddled after *Unktomi,* yelling, *"Unktomi! Unktomi!* Wait! Wait!" *Unktomi* stopped. The ducks and geese gathered around him. They spluttered, "What do you have in your pack? Do you have some stories? Do you have some songs?"

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Unktomi answered, "Yes, I have a few songs in here." The ducks and geese were very excited. They shouted, *"Unktomi*, please sing us a song. We want to dance!"

He paused for a moment, then replied, "Oh, all right, if you really want to dance. However, you must first build a large grass lodge. The songs in my pack are indoor songs. I cannot sing them outside. We need a dance lodge."

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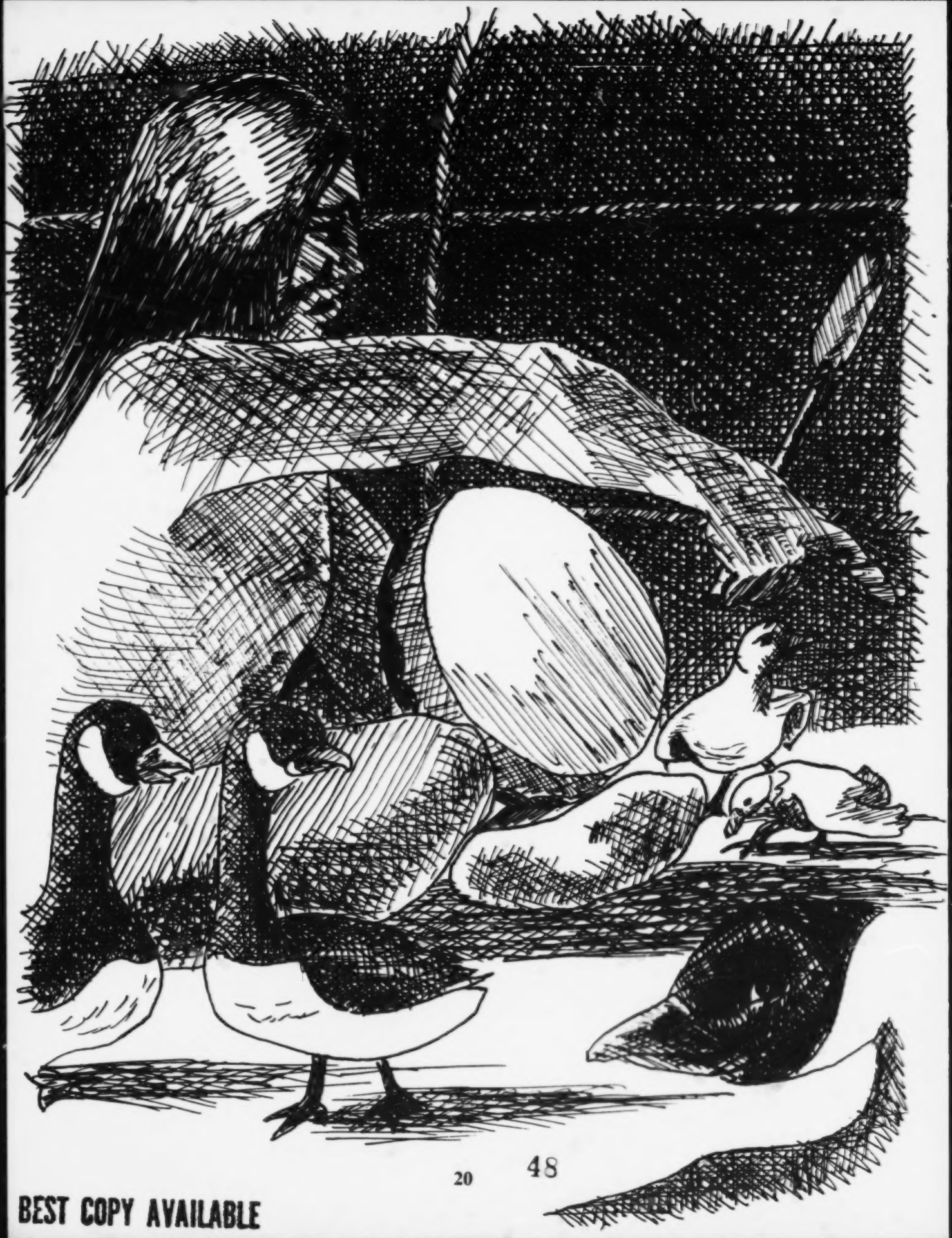
The ducks and geese were so happy that they agreed to build a lodge. They worked and worked until the lodge was finally finished.



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The ducks and geese said, *"Unktomi,* now will you sing for us?" *Unktomi* said, "Well, I was on my way to a dance in the next village. I am the chosen singer. Since you built a lodge, I guess I can sing for you.

"All of you go into the lodge and form a circle." *Unktomi* began to beat his drum and sing. The ducks and geese danced around and around.

Unktomi suddenly stopped and said, "You dance well. Come closer to me so I can see you better."

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Unktomi started drumming and singing again. The ducks and geese danced closer and closer. Then *Unktomi* stopped once more. He said, "I am going to sing you a special song. It is called the 'shut eye' song. You must dance with your eyes tightly closed. If you open them before I finish singing, you will have red eyes forever."

Unktomi began the "shut eye" song. The ducks and geese danced with their eyes tightly shut. They danced around and around — right foot, left foot, clapping their wings in time to the song. The dance became more and more lively.

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As they danced, *Unktomi* moved into the doorway. He and his pack almost blocked it.

Without changing his beat, he snatched one of the largest ducks. It did not squawk even once. *Unktomi* put the duck into his pack. He caught another and another.

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No one suspected anything, except for one little duck called *Ski ska*.[2] Something about the "shut eye" song worried him. He peeked and saw what *Unktomi* was doing.

[2]*Ski ska* (ski skah) — Dakota word meaning "wood duck."

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Ski ska yelled, "Look at what *Unktomi* is doing! Run away before he grabs all of us!"

The ducks and geese scrambled to get out of the lodge. *Unktomi* threw himself into the doorway. However, the ducks and geese trampled over *Unktomi* and ran away. *Ski ska* had saved their lives.

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Because *Ski ska* peeked, his eyes turned red, just as *Unktomi* had threatened. Ever since that time, wood ducks have had red eyes.

THE LEGEND OF THE OWL

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THE LEGEND OF THE OWL

Based on an Ojibwe legend

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THE LEGEND OF THE OWL

Long ago, Ojibwe mothers would try to keep little children quiet. A mother would say, "*Bizahn, bizahn,*[1] keep still or the owl will get you." If the children did not listen, she would go to the door of the *wigiwam,*[2] and say, "Owl, come in. Come and get these children who won't keep still."

[1]*Bizahn* (bĭ zoń) — Ojibwe word meaning "be quiet."
[2]*Wigiwam* (wĭ gi wam) — Ojibwe word meaning "house" or "dwelling."

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Long ago in an Ojibwe community, there lived a woman with her two small children, *Mahkoonce*[3] and *Waubun.*[4] She was very angry with them because they would not listen to her. In her anger, she grabbed her little son, *Mahkoonce*, and pushed him outside. Calling out, she said, "Owl, owl, come and get this boy. He won't be still. You can keep him and teach him a lesson."

[3]*Mahkoonce* (Mah koons) — Ojibwe word meaning "little bear."

[4]*Waubun* (Wah bun) — Ojibwe word meaning "dawn" or "early morning."

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After a few minutes she looked outside, thinking that she had scared *Mahkoonce* long enough for him to start behaving. However, he was not outside. She looked everywhere but could not find him. Finally, the mother alerted the people of the community and told them what had happened. The search went on for days, weeks, and months, but *Mahkoonce* was not found.

The mother was very sad about what she had done.

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After many years, *Mahkoonce* returned to the community. By this time, he was a tall young man. When the people found out who he was, they were very happy. They asked, "What happened to you all those years, *Mahkoonce?*

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He answered, "The night my mother pushed me outside, this is what happened. I had been out there only a little while when someone grabbed me. It happened so quickly, I could not even yell for help. I was very scared. Before I knew it, my head was covered and I was carried far from home.

"After a long time we stopped and went into a *wigiwam*. It was large and it reminded me of home. Although I missed my mother and *Waubun,* I became used to my new home. I always had plenty to eat."

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Mahkoonce went on by saying, "One night I found out who had taken me from my home. It was an owl who could change into a man. It was he who had cared for me all those years. From him I learned many things, such as wisdom and respect.

"As an owl, he could often hear my mother crying for me. Since he felt sorry for her, he told me to return home.

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"The reason he took me away from home was to teach the Ojibwe people a lesson. This lesson is that they should never scare their children by telling them an owl will catch them."

MIKINOK

AND

WABOOZOONS

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MIKINOK AND WABOOZOONS

Based on an Ojibwe Legend

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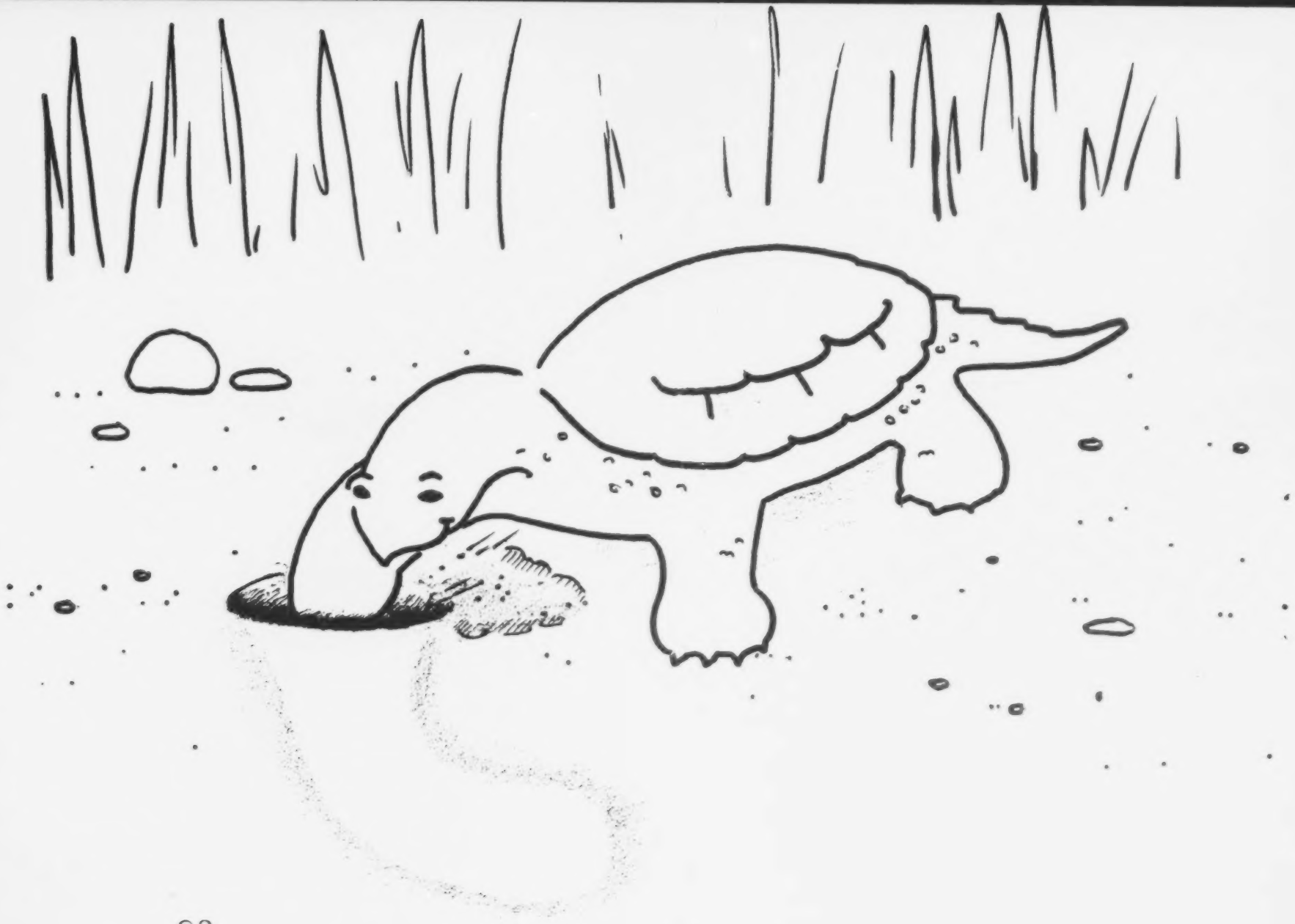

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MIKINOK AND WABOOZOONS

One day *Mikinok,*[1] the snapping turtle, was digging holes by the shore of a lake. *Mikinok* was a grandmother snapping turtle. She worked slowly and carefully. Grandmother *Mikinok* was going to put turtle eggs into the holes.

[1] *Mikinok* (mi´ki nok´) — Ojibwe word meaning "snapping turtle."

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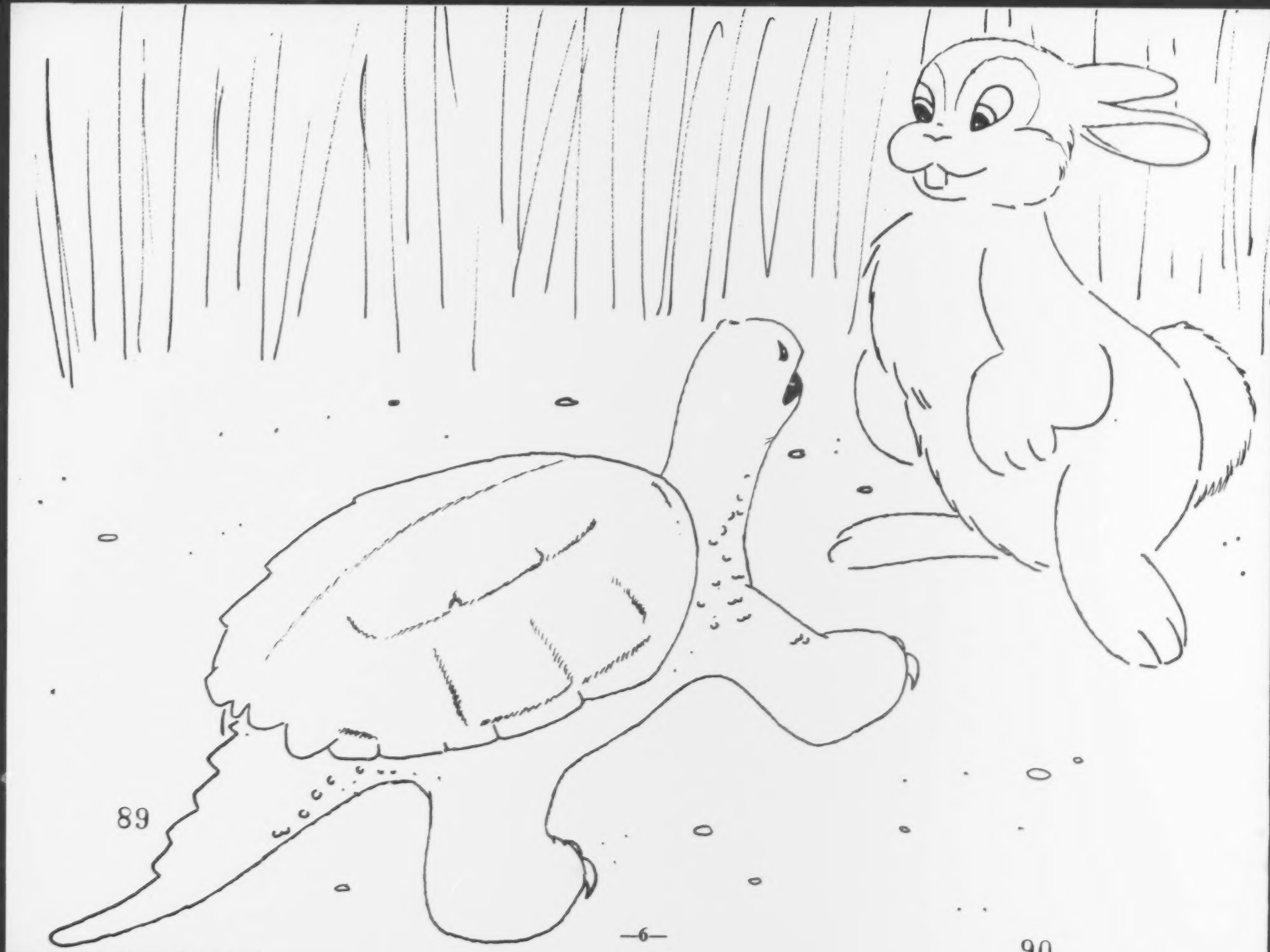
As Grandmother *Mikinok* was working, *Waboozoons,*[2] a young rabbit, hopped over to her. *Waboozoons* said, "Grandma *Mikinok,* Grandma *Mikinok,* let's run a race! Look, I'm just big now. I can really run fast."

Grandmother *Mikinok* just went on working, slowly and carefully putting eggs into the holes she had dug. *Waboozoons* did not give up. Again and again he asked Grandmother *Mikinok* to run a race. Grandmother *Mikinok* did not listen or stop working.

[2] *Waboozoons* (wah boo zoons) — Ojibwe word meaning "bunny" or "little rabbit."



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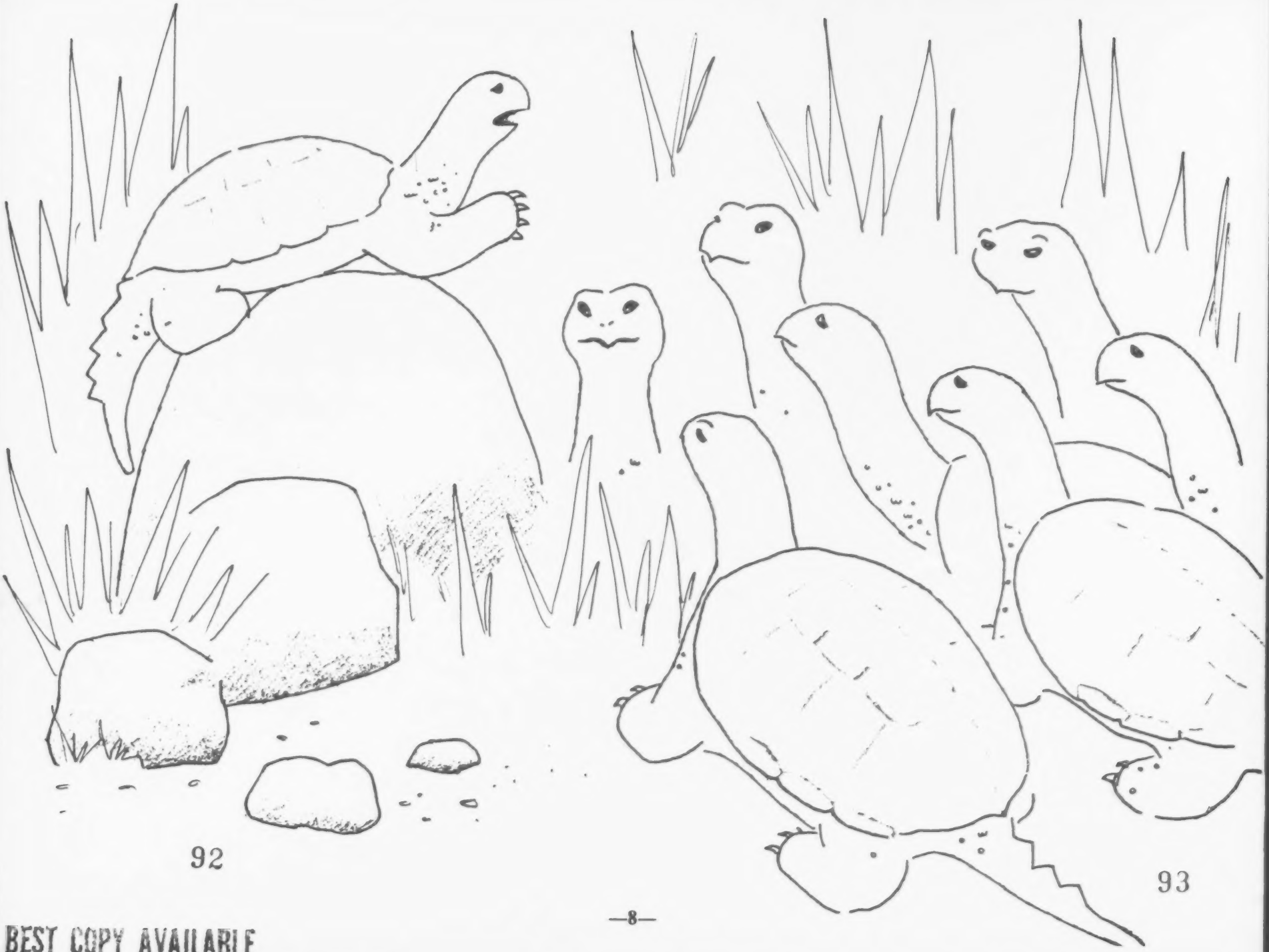
Finally, *Waboozoons* began to be a pest. Grandmother *Mikinok* gave in so that he would leave her alone. She said, "Okay, *Waboozoons,* when there is a full moon, we will race around the lake."

Waboozoons laughed and laughed. He thought it was funny that Grandmother *Mikinok* was going to race. Everyone knows that turtles are slow, especially grandmother turtles.

Waboozoons could hardly wait for the full moon.



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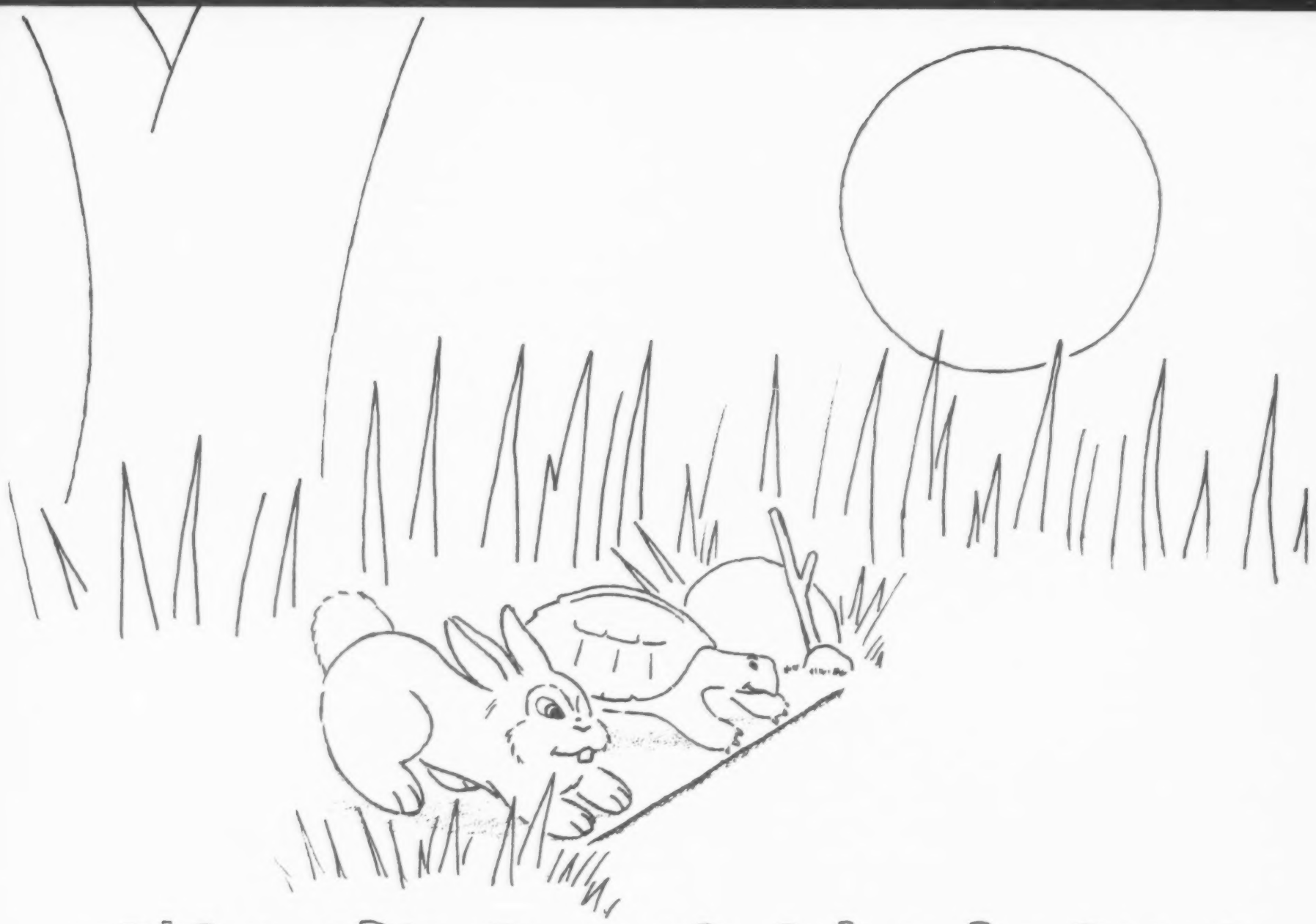
Grandmother *Mikinok* was also eager for the race because she had a plan. She called all of her turtle friends together. She asked for their help, then told them her plan.

She said to them, "I will not run the race. I will hide near the finish line and wait for *Waboozoons.* Bury yourselves under the sand at different places along the shore of the lake.

"When each of you hears *Waboozoons* running near you, poke your head out of the sand. *Waboozoons* will then think it is me. He will think I am ahead of him."



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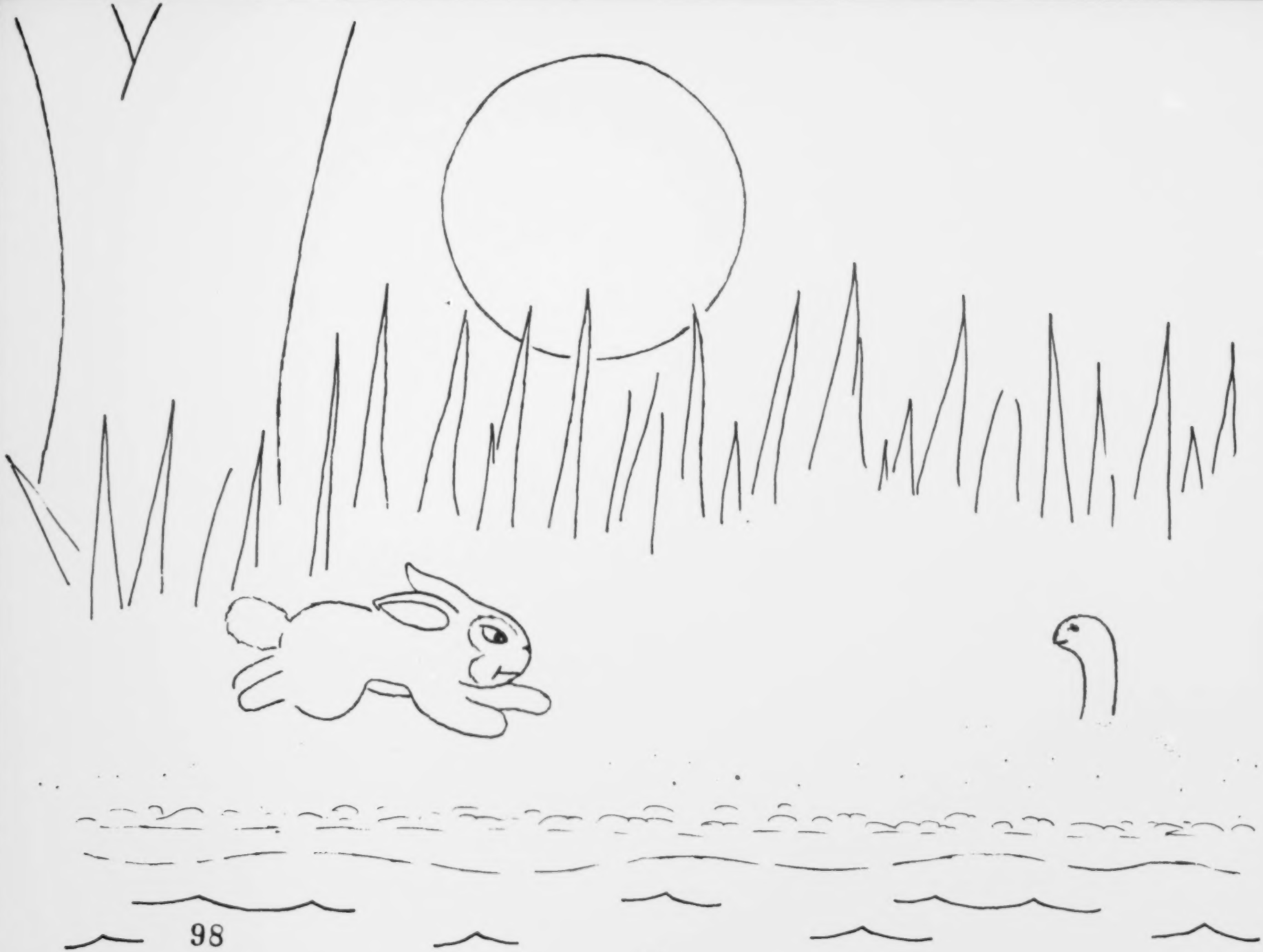
In about a week there was a full moon. *Waboozoons* and Grandmother *Mikinok* met on the shore of the lake. *Waboozoons* said, "I'm all ready to race. Are you ready, Grandma *Mikinok*?"

Grandmother *Mikinok* said, "Yes, *Waboozoons,* I am ready." They made a starting line. Then they were ready to begin the race.

The race began. *Waboozoons* quickly jumped out ahead of Grandmother *Mikinok.* He held his head down so he could run fast.



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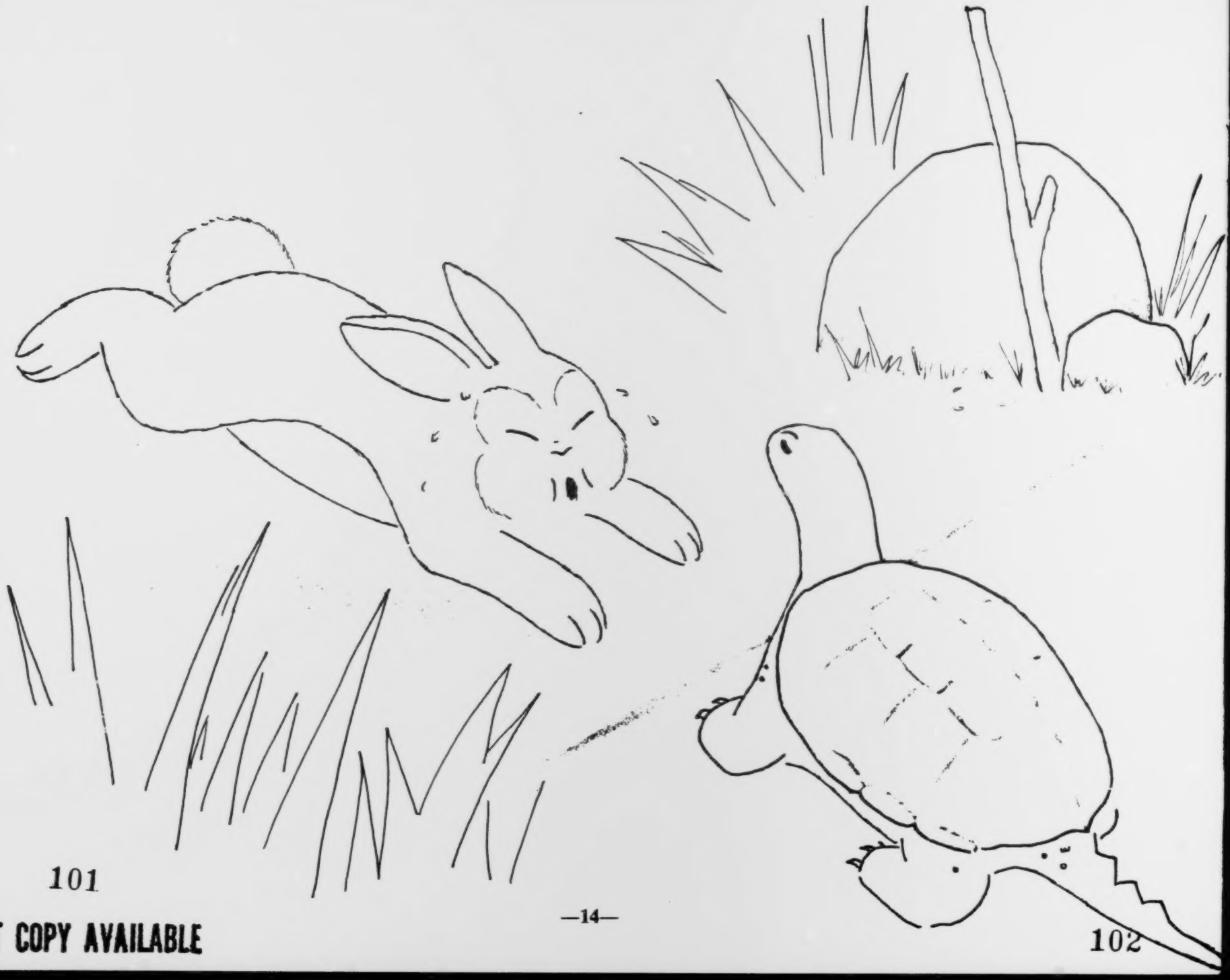
When *Waboozoons* looked up, he saw a turtle ahead of him. He knew he could catch Grandmother *Mikinok,* so he ran a little faster.

Waboozoons looked up again. He still saw a turtle in front of him. *Waboozoons* ran as fast as he could. Poor *Waboozoons!* Every time he looked up, a turtle was still ahead.



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When *Waboozoons* finally panted up to the finish line, there was Grandmother *Mikinok* waiting for him.

Waboozoons never found out how she had won the race, but he did remember what Grandmother *Mikinok* told him. She said, "Let that be a lesson for you. You should never make fun of elders."

WAYNABOOZHOO AND THE GEESE

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WAYNABOOZHOO AND THE GEESE

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Illustrated by:
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OJIBWE WORD MEANINGS

Nokomis (nó ko miss) — Ojibwe word meaning "grandmother."

Wigiwam (wĭ gi wam) — Ojibwe word meaning "house" or "dwelling."

Waynaboozhoo (way nuh boo zhoo) — A unique figure appearing in various guises in the legends of the Ojibwe. This figure is also called *Nanabozho, Nanabush,* and *Manabozho* because of regional dialect variations in the Ojibwe language.

One day *Waynaboozhoo* was talking to his grandmother, *Nokomis*, near their small *wigiwam* in the woods. *Waynaboozhoo* told *Nokomis* that he could swim better and run faster than any of the other people in the village.

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Waynaboozhoo did something else better, too. He liked to play tricks, like swimming under canoes and jerking fishing lines, springing rabbit snares with a stick, and a lot more.

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One afternoon as *Waynaboozhoo* was walking along the shore of a lake, he saw some bright red berries in the water.

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When he waded into the lake to pick them, they seemed to go away. Poor *Waynaboozhoo*. All he got was a handful of ice cold water and cold wet feet.

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He sat on the shore feeling cold and foolish. Suddenly,

he saw the same red berries in the lake again.

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Then he discovered that the bright red berries were hanging from a branch. The berries in the lake were a reflection of the feast above! He pulled the branch down.

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As he was eating the berries and laughing at himself, a loud sound over his head made him look up again. A tired flock of geese was returning from the north and they were going to land on that very lake.

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Waynaboozhoo quietly hid himself. As the geese spread their wings on the water, *Waynaboozhoo* began to plan a goose feast for *Nokomis* and himself. He wanted as many geese as he could catch. He knew that if he ran into the lake, he could only catch a few.

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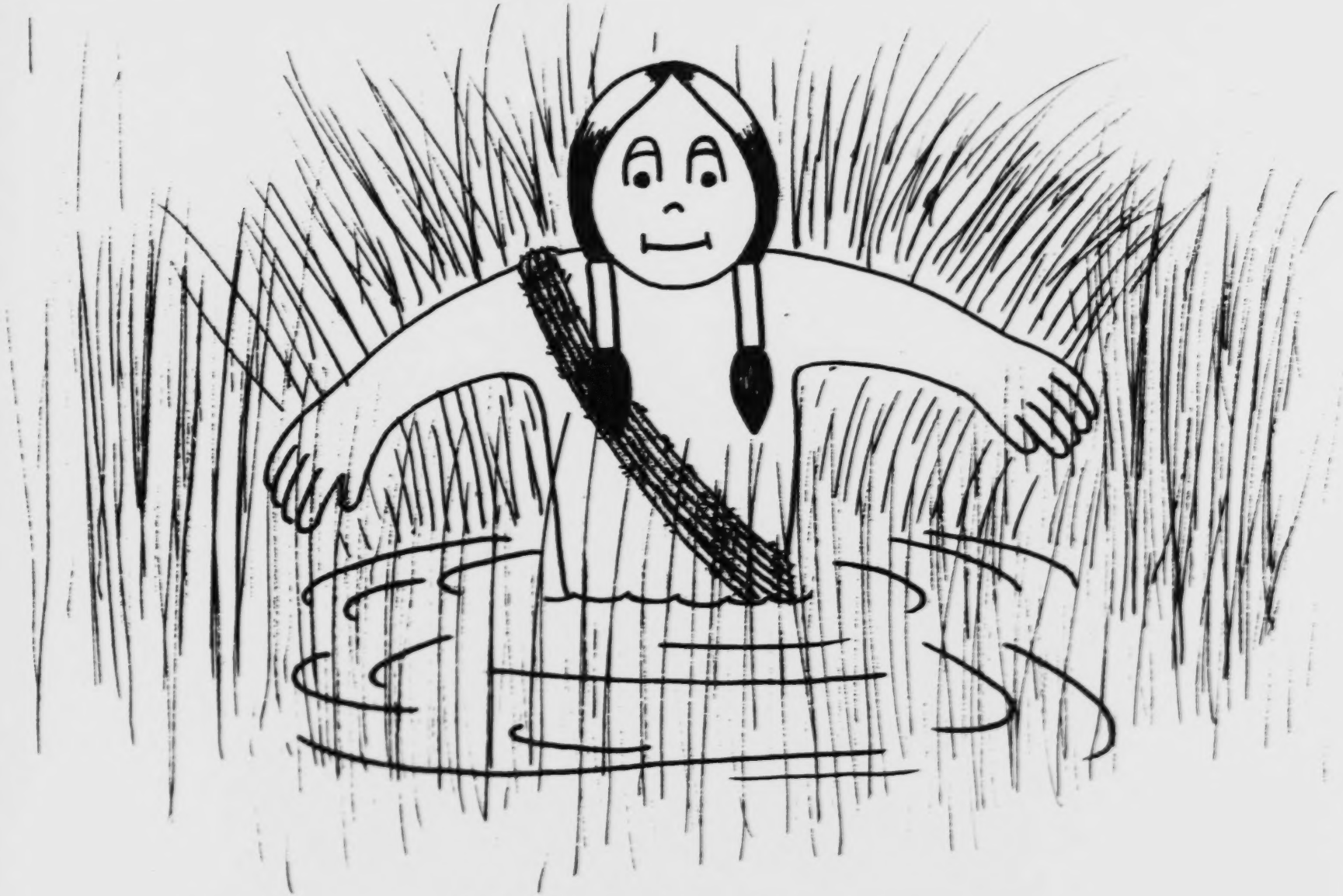

Quickly, *Waynaboozhoo* made a long strong rope from bark and wrapped it around himself. He then slipped quietly into the water and swam under the geese.

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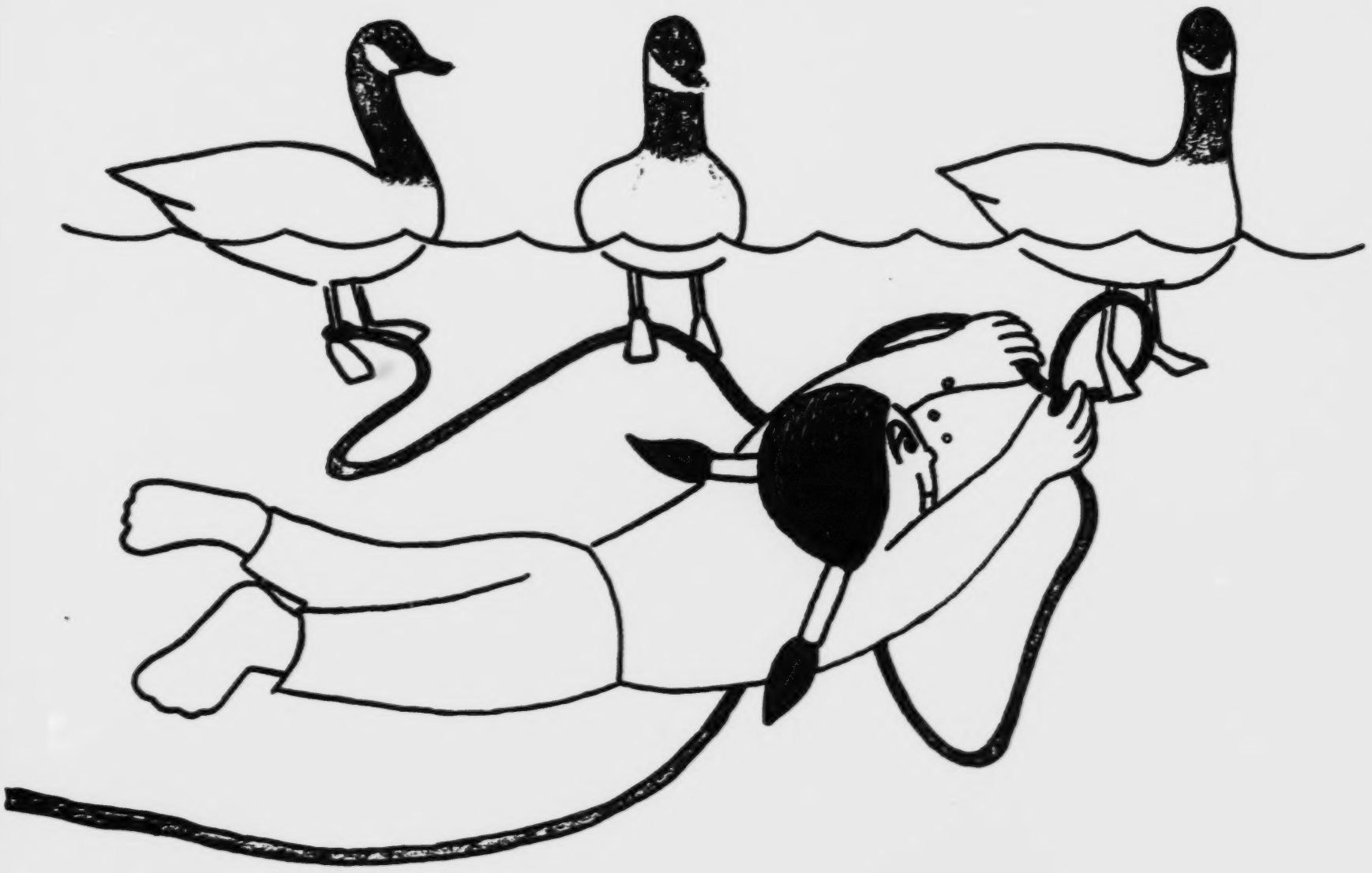

Swimming silently, he tied the feet of the geese together.

By the time he finished, he was almost out of breath.

He quickly swam to the top of the water.

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Waynaboozhoo gasped loudly as he breathed in a big gulp of air.

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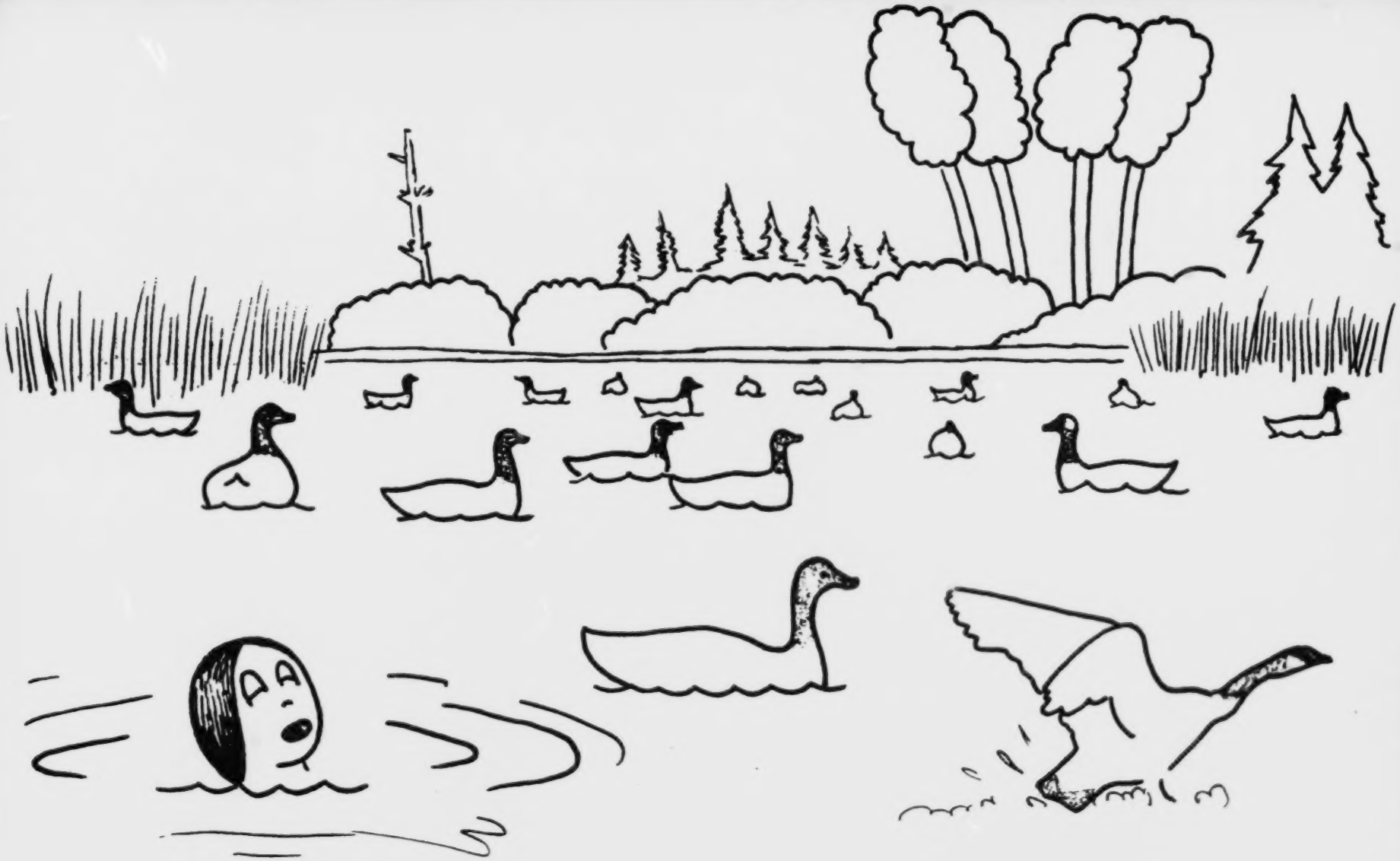

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The goose in the middle was frightened by *Waynaboozhoo's*

gasp and began to fly up.

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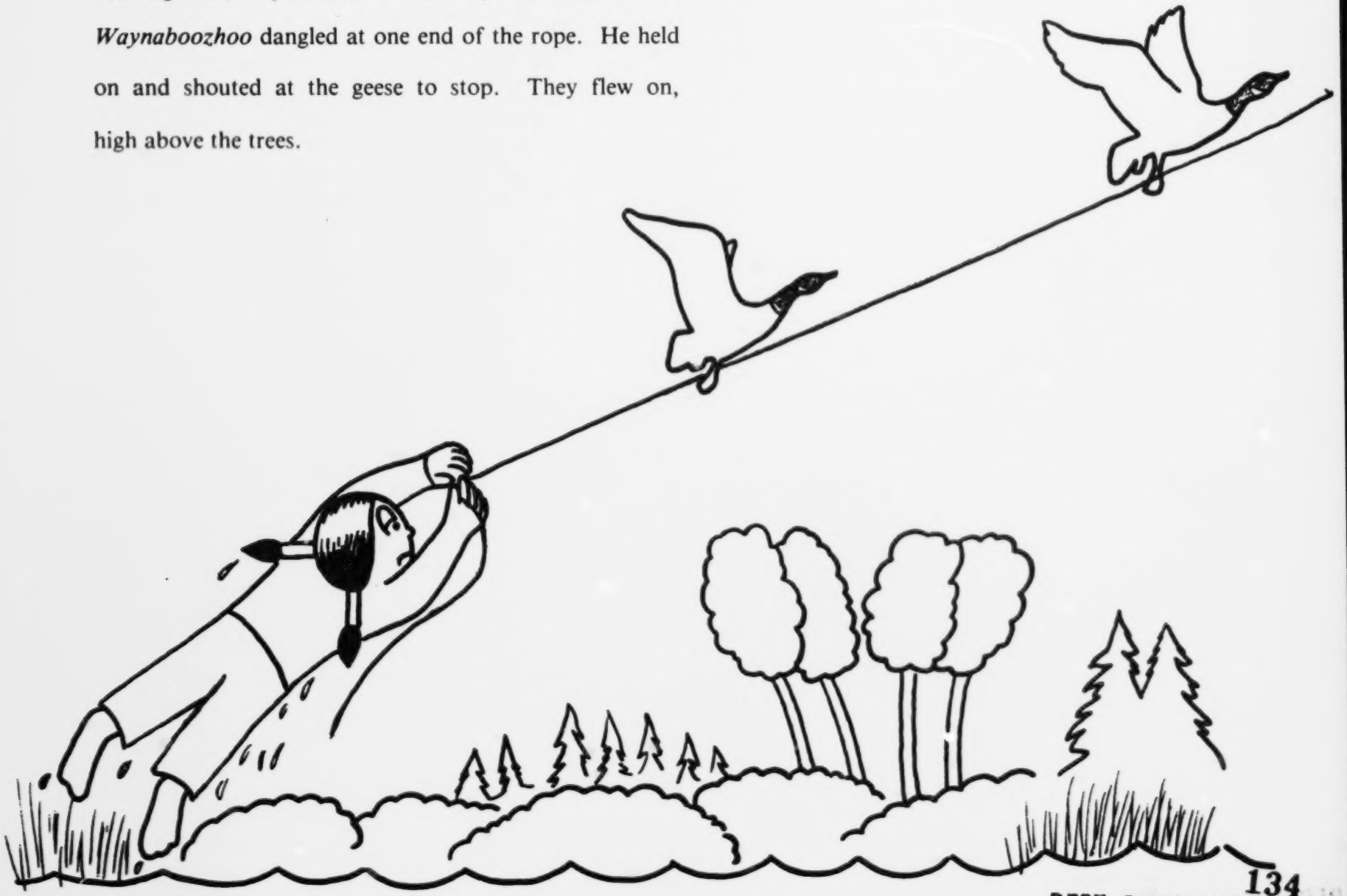
The other geese all followed. Because they were all tied together, they formed a V as they rose into the sky. *Waynaboozhoo* dangled at one end of the rope. He held on and shouted at the geese to stop. They flew on, high above the trees.



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Waynaboozhoo thought he would never see his home again.

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When the geese flew over a muddy swamp, *Waynaboozhoo* let go of the rope. He fell into the swamp. The soft mud oozed around his body. He was not hurt.

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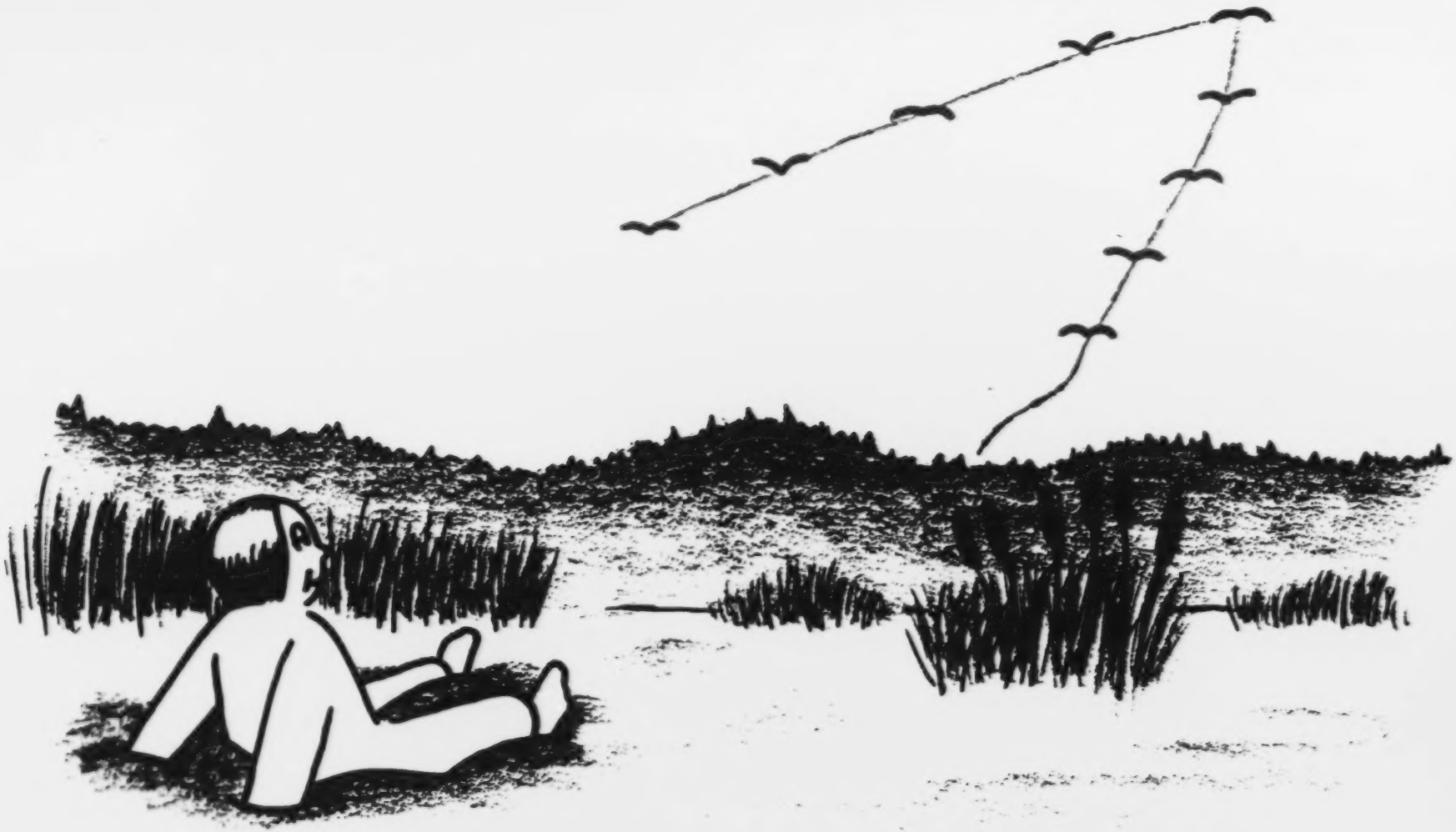

Waynaboozhoo sat in the mud watching the geese as they flew away. They were still flying in a V because of the rope *Waynaboozhoo* had tied to them.

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Geese have been flying in a V ever since. If you look up into the autumn sky, you can often see them.

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HOW THE GULLIES AND DITCHES CAME TO BE

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HOW THE GULLIES AND DITCHES CAME TO BE

Based on a Winnebago Legend

Retold by:

Howard Joseph McKee, Jr.
Winnebago

for the

Indian Elementary Curriculum Project
Hans Christian Andersen Complex
1098 Andersen Lane, Room C207
Minneapolis, MN 55407

Illustrated by:

Steve Premo
Mille Lacs Ojibwe

FOREWORD

A common character in Winnebago legends is *Wukjunk kuhguh,* or "Foolish One." Stories told on winter nights were called *wy-cahn.* They would be told after lights went out and the fires were burning low. Generally, younger children fell asleep before the storyteller was finished. The stories told how things came to be, taught lessons on behavior, told about respect, related the teachings of animals, and were often humorous. The trickster was usually the central figure and the butt of his own joke.

Barry Blackhawk
Winnebago

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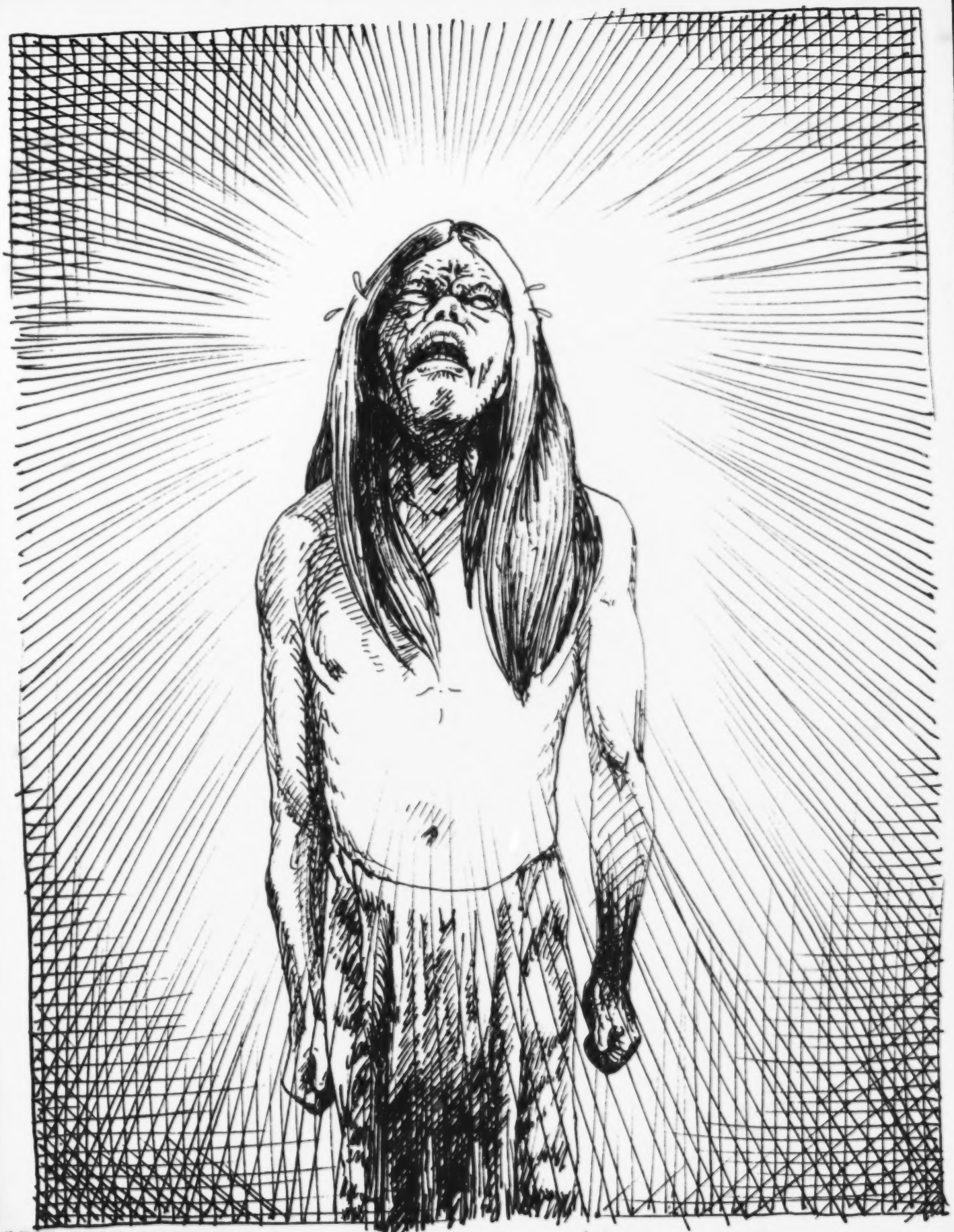
HOW THE GULLIES AND DITCHES CAME TO BE

As time passes, so do the everyday moods of people. Even *Wukjunk kuhguh,* the trickster, had different moods.



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One day, *Wukjunk kuhguh* began to cry. He cried and cried.

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No one knew why he was crying, but everyone tried to make him stop. *Wukjunk kuhguh* just cried harder. Some thought he would never stop.

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After three days and three nights of crying, *Wukjunk kuhguh* began to run out of tears. He knew he would soon have to stop. Because he cried for so long, he had a lot of crying to bring to a stop.

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He held his breath just like babies do. Have you ever heard babies cry? After crying for a long time, they have to work hard to stop. Their crying has to stop a little bit at a time. They cry very hard, then whimper to a stop. They go, "Whih, whih, whih," and then finally stop.

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As soon as *Wukjunk kuhguh's* tears had run out, he had to go "Whih, whih, whih," too. *Wukjunk kuhguh's* "Whih, whih, whih," was so great that the earth started to shake.

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It shook and shook. *Wukjunk kuhguh* was frightened. When the shaking finally stopped, *Wukjunk kuhguh* was surprised to see large ditches in the earth! Not only that, but his tears had caused small valleys, or gullies, to form.

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If you look around, you can still see gullies and ditches. Now you know how they came to be.

THE TRICKSTER and the TREE

INDIAN
ELEMENTARY
CURRICULUM PROJECT
Hans Christian Andersen Complex
Room C 207
1098 Andersen Lane
Minneapolis, MN 55407

Retold by: Howard Joseph McKee, Jr.

Illustrated by: Steve Premo

Adapted to an elementary reading level by: Nan Fraser

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THE TRICKSTER AND THE TREE

Did you ever play a trick on someone and end up having the trick played on you? In Winnebago legends there is a man who had that happen to him a lot. He has many names, but the Winnebago people call him the trickster.

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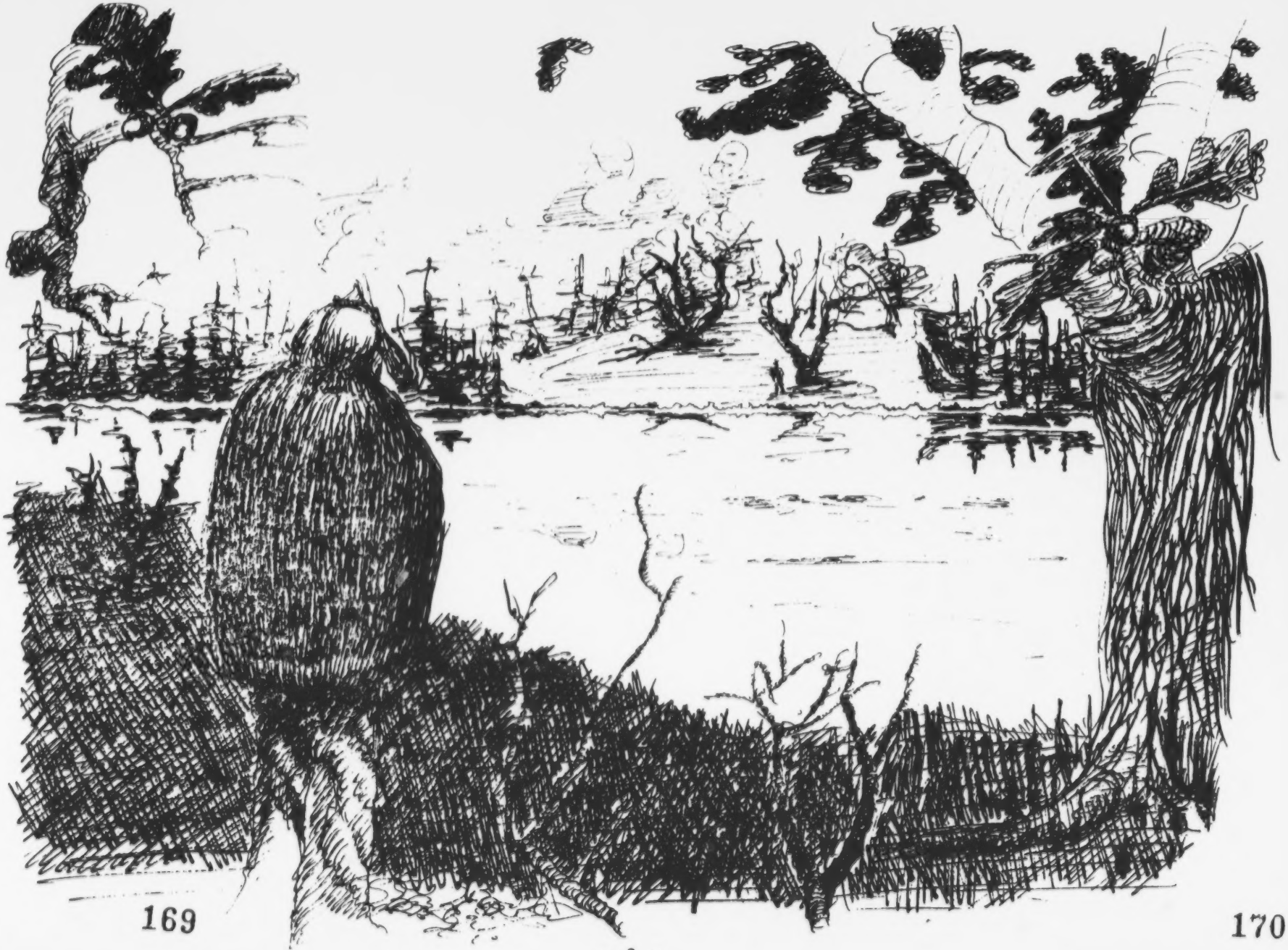

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One day when the trickster was out on a long walk, he came to the shore of a big lake. He looked across the lake and saw someone standing on the other shore. The trickster hollered, "Hello!," but no one answered him. The man on the opposite shore just stood still with his arm pointing toward the south.

The trickster was unhappy because no one answered him. He thought he'd show the man that it was not nice to be so impolite.

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"Say, friend," he shouted. "I'll bet I can stand here and point south longer than you can!"

Still the man on the opposite shore did not answer. He just kept pointing south. So the trickster stood there with his arm pointing south. All through the winter, spring, summer, and fall he stood there.

He finally cried, "I am growing tired of this game." So he called out, "Say, friend, let's call it a tie," and he began walking around the lake.

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Just as he finished saying the last word, he came up next to the figure he had been calling to.

"Ah, me," he muttered to himself. "It is no wonder that the people of my tribe say I am silly. All this time I have been having a pointing contest with a cottonwood tree!"

And so the trickster moved on, thinking of how foolish he had been -- and of how hungry he was!

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